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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - U.S. REPRESENTATION AT JOHN PAUL II FUNERAL IRAQ - FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT
PARIS - FRIDAY, APRIL 08, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

1. U.S. REPRESENTATION AT JOHN PAUL II FUNERAL
2. IRAQ - FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE SEA OF FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS FLOCKING TO ROME IS TODAY'S LEAD STORY. RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO HEADLINES: "THE WORLD UNITED AROUND JOHN PAUL II." AN ARTICLE BY WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT PHILIPPE GELIE REPORTING ON THE U.S. DELEGATION TO THE VATICAN EMPHASIZES THE NEW HISTORIC ERA BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE VATICAN, IN CONTRAST WITH THE KENNEDY DAYS, "WHEN JFK WAS SUSPECTED OF BEING MANIPULATED BY ROME." IN POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR THOMAS DE ROCHECHOUART NOTES THE EARLY ARRIVAL OF THE U.S. DELEGATION IN ROME, "BEFORE ALL THE OTHERS" (SEE PART C)

THE SECOND MAJOR STORY ELICITING REPORTS AND COMMENTARIES IS THE FORMATION OF IRAQ'S NEW GOVERNMENT. AN EDITORIAL IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE UNDERSCORES THE "HISTORIC" NATURE OF IRAQ'S "REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY, WHICH IS RATHER RARE FOR THE REGION." (SEE PART C)

THE TERRORIST ATTACK IN CAIRO IS WIDELY REPORTED, WITH SOME STORIES REPORTING THE AS YET UNCONFIRMED DEATH OF AN AMERICAN IN ADDITION TO THE CONFIRMED DEATH OF A FRENCH WOMAN. POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR INTERVIEWS ROLAND JACQUARD, AN EXPERT ON ISLAMIC TERRORISM AND A CONSULTANT TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS: "TERRORIST NETWORKS IN EGYPT CONTINUE TO BE VERY ACTIVE, IN SPITE OF MAJOR ARRESTS. WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT AL-QAEDA'S NUMBER TWO IS EGYPTIAN. ACTIVISTS WANT TO HIT MODERATE ARAB COUNTRIES WHICH COOPERATE WITH THE WEST IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. BECAUSE TOURISM IS CRUCIAL FOR EGYPT'S ECONOMY, TOURISM HAS BECOME AL-QAEDA'S NUMBER ONE TARGET. THERE IS AN ULTRA RADICAL BRANCH OF JAMAA ISLAMIYA IN EGYPT. IT HAS JUST HIT A TOURIST TARGET IN EGYPT, WHICH IS IN THE MIDST OF A MAJOR DEBATE ABOUT MUBARAK'S POLITICAL SUCCESSION."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

U.S. REPRESENTATION AT JOHN PAUL II FUNERAL

"THREE U.S. PRESIDENTS PRAYING TOGETHER"

PHILIPPE GELIE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/08): "THE THREE PRESIDENTS WHO PRAYED TOGETHER BEFORE THE POPE'S REMAINS ON WEDNESDAY EVENING ILLUSTRATED THAT THE U.S. WAS ONE OF THE MOST FAITHFUL 'DAUGHTERS' OF THE CHURCH. FOR A NATION FOUNDED ON PROTESTANTS WHO FLED RELIGIOUS REPRESSION, THIS IS QUITE A CHANGE. IF PRESIDENT BUSH DECIDED TO MAKE THE TRIP, IT WASN'T JUST TO PLEASE THE HISPANIC AMERICANS, A MINORITY BUT AN IMPORTANT ONE. THE VALUE OF THE GESTURE GOES WELL BEYOND THAT. PRESIDENT BUSH'S PRESENCE CONFIRMS THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE VATICAN HAS OVERCOME ITS TRADITIONAL COMPLEX. THIS CONTRASTS WITH THE KENNEDY ERA, WHEN THE PRESIDENT WAS THEN SUSPECTED OF 'BEING MANIPULATED BY ROME.'"

"BUSH BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE"

THOMAS DE ROCHECHOUART IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR (04/08): "THE U.S. PRESIDENT'S EAGERNESS TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE POPE IS ALL THE MORE OUT OF PLACE BECAUSE HE IS PROTESTANT. WHILE PRESIDENT BUSH HAS NEVER HIDDEN HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, THIS MIXTURE OF THE POLITICAL WITH THE RELIGIOUS IS DANGEROUS. AND WHAT CAN WE SAY ABOUT THE HOLY SEE GRANTING EARLY PRIVILEGES FOR THE VISIT, WHICH LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE A 'UNION OF CHRISTIAN FORCES' UNDER THE TWO BANNERS, THE VATICAN'S AND THE U.S. FLAG.?"

IRAQ - FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT

"A KURD FOR IRAQ"

LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE IN ITS EDITORIAL (04/08): "THE ELECTION OF JALAL TALABANI IS AN UNPRECEDENTED EVENT IN MORE THAN ONE WAY. IT IS THE FIRST TIME A KURD BECOMES PRESIDENT OF IRAQ, AND THE FIRST TIME A NON-ARAB PRESIDES OVER A COUNTRY

WHERE THERE IS A MAJORITY ARAB POPULATION. JALAL TALABANI WILL ALSO BE THE FIRST DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF IRAQ. EVEN IF IRAQ'S JANUARY 30 ELECTIONS COULD NEVER SERVE AS A MODEL FOR WESTERN DEMOCRACIES. BUT IN THE CHAOTIC SITUATION OF IRAQ, WHERE VIOLENCE HAS NOT RELENTED SINCE THE END OF THE AMERICAN-LED WAR, THE ELECTIONS HAVE NEVERTHELESS GIVEN THAT NATION A REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY, A RATHER RARE FEAT FOR THE REGION. WHILE THE COLLEGIAL NATURE OF THE PRESIDENCY COULD BE A HANDICAP FOR THE COUNTRY, IT ALSO PROVES THAT THE THREE COMMUNITIES ARE DETERMINED TO WORK TOGETHER. THE NOMINATION OF A KURDISH PRESIDENT PROVES ALSO A DESIRE TO MAINTAIN IRAQ'S UNITY AND TO AVOID, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, AN INDEPENDENT KURDISTAN. THE MOST URGENT MATTER AT HAND FOR THE NEW AUTHORITIES IS CURBING TERRORISM. TALABANI HAS ALREADY MADE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN TERRORISTS SUPPORTED AND FINANCED FROM ABROAD, AND 'IRAQIS BEARING ARMS AGAINST FOREIGN TROOPS.' THIS NEW STYLE WOULD INDICATE A DESIRE TO INTEGRATE THE LATTER GROUP IN THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL PROCESS, IF THE GROUP AGREES TO GIVE UP ON VIOLENCE. IN THIS CASE A NEW PAGE WOULD BE TURNED ON THE ROAD TO IRAQ'S STABILIZATION." LEACH